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the amount to be paid, as well as the information exchange functions between terminals and systems, are identical to those described above. Moreover, it is evident that, in the case of operation only with personal terminals, the terminal dispensing function is not needed any more, and that the single function of automatic identification of personal terminals is sufficient for the system to proceed with the subsequent steps of product data acquisition, download, and processing.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1 - 35 as follows:

1. {AMENDED} A dispensing device of portable terminals for acquiring product data in a shopping centre, comprising:

- a plurality of cradles for a corresponding plurality of portable terminals adapted to be withdrawn and used by the customers of the shopping centre for product data acquisition;

- means for identifying each customer enabled to use the portable terminals;

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- means for communicating to each identified customer a terminal to be withdrawn from the dispensing device for the product data acquisition;

- a data control and processing unit adapted to control the identifying means and the communicating means and for processing the product data acquired through said terminals;

wherein said plurality of cradles, said identifying means, said communication means, and said control unit are housed in a single housing, and in that said plurality of cradles is housed in a substantially flat portion of said housing provided in close proximity of the customer identification means so as to allow access to said plurality of terminals.

2. {AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, wherein said portion for housing said terminals is substantially horizontal.

3. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, wherein said portion for housing said terminals comprises a box-shaped body including a plurality of compartments constituting said plurality of terminal cradles.

4. {AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 3, wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments is adapted to house a terminal of said plurality of terminals and comprises locking/unlocking means of the terminal housed therein.

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5. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 3, wherein said box-shaped body comprises first electrical connectors adapted to co-operate with second electrical connectors provided on the terminals.

6. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 3, wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments comprises:

- a first upper aperture for inserting the terminal, wherein a vertical axis and a terminal insertion axis inclined by a predetermined angle with respect to the vertical axis are defined;
- a second lower service aperture below the first aperture;
- means for guiding the terminal into the compartment.

7. {AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 6, wherein said second aperture has a size larger than that of said first aperture.

8. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 6, wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments comprises a terminal support element arranged outside a projection of the first aperture along the vertical axis.

9. {AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 8, wherein said terminal

support element comprises opposed guiding walls inclined at said predetermined angle with respect to said vertical axis, and wherein one of said walls comprises a support step for contacting a lower end of the terminal, the support step being arranged outside the projection of the first aperture along the vertical axis.

10. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 6, wherein said box-shaped body comprises a covering surface provided with a plurality of holes at said first terminal insertion apertures.

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B 11. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, further comprising means for moving the housing.

12. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according claim 1, wherein the customer identifying means comprises at least any one of the following means: a magnetic card reader, a smart card reader, a bar-code card reader, an optical receiver, a radio or mobile phone receiver, a fingerprint reader, a fingerprint or retina detector, a device for entering a numerical code, a voice detector.

13. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, wherein the means for communicating to identified customers the terminals to be withdrawn comprises at least any one of the following means: visual communication means on a display or monitor, visual communication means in the proximity of each cradle of said plurality of cradles, sound or voice communication means, terminal lifting means provided into each cradle of said plurality of cradles.

14. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, wherein the communicating means provides one of marketing information, promotional information and a discount voucher.

15. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, further comprising data transmission and/or reception means to and from optical and/or radio-type terminals.

16. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, wherein said housing comprises a charge/discharge circuit for batteries of the terminals.

17. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according claim 3, wherein each compartment comprises at least one sensor for indicating presence and/or correct arrangement of the terminal into the compartment.

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18. {TWICE AMENDED} A dispensing device according to claim 1, wherein said housing comprises means for printing one of ticket, marketing or promotional information and a discount voucher.

19. {AMENDED} An integrated system for the automatic dispensing of portable terminals for acquiring product data, comprising:

- at least one dispenser of portable terminals for acquiring product data;
- a control station of said at least one terminal dispenser;
- a connection network between said at least one terminal dispenser and said control station so as to allow the exchange of information therebetween.

20. {ONCE AMENDED} A system according to claim 19, wherein said at least one terminal dispenser comprises:

- a plurality of cradles for a corresponding plurality of portable terminals adapted to be withdrawn and used by the customers of the shopping centre for product data acquisition;
- means for identifying each customer enabled to use the portable terminals;
- means for communicating to each identified customer a terminal to be withdrawn

from the dispensing device for the product data acquisition;

- a data control and processing unit adapted to control the identifying means and the communicating means and for processing the product data acquired through said terminals;

wherein said plurality of cradles, said identifying means, said communication means, and said control unit are housed in a single housing, and in that said plurality of cradles is housed in a substantially flat portion of said housing provided in close proximity of the customer identification means so as to allow access to said plurality of terminals.

21. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 19, wherein said control station is in remote position with respect to said at least one terminal dispenser.

22. {AMENDED} A system according to claim 21, wherein said connection network is a wireless local network.

23. {AMENDED} A system according to claim 21, wherein said connection network is a geographic network.

24. {AMENDED} An integrated system according to claim 19, further comprising

- means for downloading the product data acquired through the terminals;
- means for computing, as a function of the acquired data, an amount to be paid.

25. {AMENDED} A system according to claim 24, wherein said means for downloading the product data acquired through the terminals are housed in the terminal dispenser.

26. {AMENDED} A system according to claim 24, wherein said means for downloading the product data acquired through the terminals are provided in remote

position with respect to the terminal dispenser.

27. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 24, further comprising at least one cash register for the payment of said amount.

28. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 24, further comprising means for charging an amount to be paid directly to a bank account of the customer.

29. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 24, wherein at least a portion of the terminals used for acquiring the product data is dispensed to the customers for personal use.

30. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 24, wherein at least a portion of the terminals used for acquiring the product data belongs to the customers.

31. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 29, wherein the terminal has means for allowing automatic identification of the customer.

32. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 24, wherein at least one of said terminals exchanges information with the control station through a wireless connection network.

33. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to 24, wherein at least one of the terminals receives, either visually or voice, one of marketing information, promotional information, and a discount voucher.

34. {TWICE AMENDED} A system according to claim 28, wherein said means for charging the amount to be paid is controlled by the terminal.

35. {AMENDED} An integrated system for the sales of products through the use of a portable terminal belonging to the customer, comprising:

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- means for identifying the customer through identification of the respective terminal belonging to the customer, said terminal being adapted to acquire product data;
 - means for downloading the product data acquired through the identified terminal;
 - means for computing, as a function of the acquired product data, an amount to be paid.

Please add new claims 36 - 43 as follows:

Sub 36. {NEW} A dispenser of portable terminals, the portable terminals being used to acquire product data, the dispenser comprising:

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- a dispenser housing;
 - plural compartments in the housing for accommodating corresponding plural portable terminals;
 - means for identifying a customer entitled to withdraw and use one of the portable terminals;
 - means for communicating to the entitled customer which one of the plural portable terminals is allocated to the entitled customer for use in product data acquisition;
 - a data control and processing unit which controls the identifying means, the communicating means, and which processes the product data acquired through the product data acquisition;
 - wherein each compartment comprises:
 - an upper aperture for receiving a terminal inserted therein;
 - a compartment first wall inclined at a predetermined angle to a vertical axis
 - a support step provided on the compartment first wall for contacting a lower end of the terminal.